A GANDHI ANTHOLOGY

BOOK I

VALJI GOVINDJI DESAI

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
27 SEP 1955
. KALLUPATTI

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

A GANDHI ANTHOLOGY

BOOK I

Compiled by

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27 SEP 1955
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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
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First Edition, 3,000 copies, April 1952

Eight annas

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Printed & Published by Jivanji D. Desai
Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 9

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I	
DEATH AND IMMORTALITY	3
II	
DEATH AND REBIRTH	9
III	
'MY STATUE!'	10
IV	
MARTYRDOM	11
V	
THE NATIONAL WEEK	14
VI	
HOW WE CELEBRATED THE WEEK IN 1926	17
VII	
THE FEAR OF DEATH	20
VIII	
THE DRINK EVIL	25
IX	
'I HAVE A HORROR OF SMOKING'	28
X	
A PROGRAMME FOR PROHIBITION	29
XI	
RACES, BETTING AND GAMBLING	31
XII	
SPIRITUALISM	32
XIII	
THE IDEAL LAWYER	33
XIV	
ANIMAL SACRIFICES	33

XV
VIVISECTION 33
XVI
VEGETARIANISM 34
XVII
MY MISSION 34
XVIII
NON-VIOLENCE AND KHADI 35
XIX
KHADI IN VARIOUS ASPECTS 36
XX
THE NATIONAL FLAG 44
XXI
NON-VIOLENCE IN VARIOUS ASPECTS 46
XXII
NON-VIOLENCE AGAIN 54

A GANDHI ANTHOLOGY

BOOK I

I

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

(a)

Death is at any time blessed, but it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, i.e. truth. Death is no fiend, he is the truest of friends. He delivers us from agony. He helps us against ourselves. He ever gives us new chances, new hopes. He is like sleep a sweet restorer. Yet it is customary to mourn when a friend dies. The custom has no operation when the death is that of a martyr.

(b)

God knows what work to take out of me. He will not permit me to live a moment longer than He needs me for His work.

(c)

Death which is an eternal verity is revolution as birth and after is slow and steady evolution. Death is as necessary for man's growth as life itself.

(d)

What a comforting thought it is to think of death, whenever it comes, as a wise plan in the economy of nature? If we could realize this law of our being and be prepared for death as a welcome friend and deliverer, we should cease to engage in the frantic struggle for life. We shall cease to want to live at the cost of other lives and in contempt of all considerations of humanity.

(e)

Life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin. In fact tribulations and death seem to me to present a phase far richer than happiness or life. What is life worth without trials and tribulations which are the salt of life?...What is the Ramayana but a record of the trials, privations and penances of Rama and Sita?...I want you all to treasure death and suffering more than life and to appreciate their cleansing and purifying character.

(f)

The progress achieved fills me with hope, ...but even if I depart from this body before the hope is fulfilled, I would

not think that I had failed. For I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. I therefore know that even a little effort is not wasted.

(g)

I believe in the immortality of the soul. I would like to give you the analogy of the ocean. The ocean is composed of drops of water; each drop is an entity and yet it is part of the whole, 'the one and the many.' In this ocean of life we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum-total of this life is God.

(h)

The few days' separation is a preparation for the longer that death brings. In fact the separation is only superficial. Death brings us nearer. Is not the body a bar — if it is also an introduction? (*Bapu's Letters to Mira*, Navajivan, p. 12).

(i)

The loved one lives more truly for the dissolution of the body and renders the love also truer because unselfish and also because it is transferred to all that lives (*Ibid*, p. 159).

(k)

We must learn the art of never grieving over death, no matter when and to whom it comes. I suppose that we shall do when we have really learnt to be utterly indifferent to our own, and the indifference will come when we are every moment conscious of having done the task to which we are called. But how shall we know the task? By knowing God's will. How shall we know the will? By proper and right living. Indeed prayer should mean right living. There is a *bhajan* [hymn]. . . .whose refrain is 'Prayer has been never known to have failed anybody.' Prayer means being one with God (*Ibid*, p. 301).

(l)

We really live through and in our work. We perish through our perishable bodies, if instead of using them as temporary instruments, we identify ourselves with them (*Ibid*, p. 41).

(m)

You come in daily touch with me by doing my work as if it was your own (*Ibid*, p. 47).

(n)

Life is a preparation for death. And somehow or other we quail to think of that

inevitable and grand event. It is grand even regarded as a preparation for a better life than the past, as it should be for every one who tries to live in the fear of God (*Ibid*, p. 195).

(o)

Nothing but a fixed faith that death for the good is a translation to a better state, and for the evil a beneficent escape can reconcile us to the mystery of death (*Ibid*, p. 323).

(p)

God's grace descends upon us unawares as we work away for Him. You must work for Him, that is, spin even when you are weeping. For spinning for us is the greatest of all sacrificial acts. (To Anand Hingorani, 15-10-1944)

(q)

The spinning wheel is a very present help to the unhappy, to the hungry millions. You must ply it at all times, and all the more so in distress. (To the same, 16-10-1944)

(r)

You must frame your time-table in such a way that you have not got a single

moment's leisure, and thus show real affection for the dear departed spirit. (To the same, 17-10-1944)

(s)

We do not know if the dead can do something for the living; but we do know that the living can for the dead. Therefore never weep for them. (To the same, 18-10-1944)

(t)

The best way in which you can observe the anniversary of Vidya's departure is to spin.

Vidya wept and said, "Show God to me face to face." I said: "You will see Him in the spinning wheel." (To the same, 20-10-1944)

II

DEATH AND REBIRTH

(a)

Before we become a nation possessing an effective voice in the councils of nations, we must be prepared to contemplate with equanimity, not a thousand murders of innocent men and women but many thousands. Only then can we attain a status in the world that shall not be surpassed by any other nation.

(b)

The self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times more potent than the self-sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others.

(c)

I hope there will be non-violent non-co-operators enough in India of whom it will be written : 'They suffered bullets without anger and with prayer on their lips even for the ignorant murderer.'

(d)

I am not aching for martyrdom but if it comes my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in

the defence of the faith of love, I shall have earned it.

(e)

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.

III

'MY STATUE!'

(a)

I must dissent emphatically from any proposal to spend any money on preparing a statue of me, especially at a time when people do not have enough food and clothing. In Bombay the beautiful, insanitation reigns. There is so much overcrowding that poor people are packed like sardines. Wise use of ten lakhs of rupees will consist in its being spent on some public utility. That would be the best statue. (*Harijan*, XI. 34, p. 329, 21 September, 1947)

(b)

It is blasphemy to talk of such a man as dead. The permanent essence of him abides with us for ever. Let us erect for the only Lokamanya of India an *imperishable monument* by weaving into our own lives his bravery, his simplicity, his wonderful industry and his love of his country.

[The italics are the editor's]

IV
MARTYRDOM

(a)

A martyr's death is surely the last seal upon his sacrifice and a precursor of victory (letter to Mr Arthur Moore dated 4 December 1940).

(b)

Where is the reformer who has not a price put upon his head? ... There is nothing untoward in the assassination [of Swami Shraddhanand] having taken place.

Swamiji...was a man of action, not of words...He was a warrior. And a warrior loves to die not on a sick-bed but on the battlefield...

We have not the last words of Swamiji, but if I knew him at all, I have no doubt that he prayed to his God to forgive him who knew not that he was doing anything wrong. In the language of the Gita therefore 'happy the warrior who achieves such a blessed death.'

...I cannot therefore mourn over his death. He and his are to be envied. For though Shraddhanandji is dead, he is yet living. He is living in a truer sense than when he moved in our midst in his giant body...

Let us not ascribe the crime of an individual to a whole community. Let us not harbour the spirit of retaliation.

I wish to plead for Abdul Rashid...It does not matter to me what prompted the deed. The fault is ours. The newspaperman has become a walking plague. He spreads the contagion of lies and calumnies. He exhausts the foul vocabulary of his dialect and injects his virus into the unsuspecting and often receptive minds of his readers. Secret and insidious propaganda has done its dark and horrible work, unchecked and unabashed. It is therefore we, the educated and the semi-educated

class that are responsible for the hot fever which possessed Abdul Rashid.

It is too much to hope, but Swamiji was great enough to warrant the hope that his blood may wash us of our guilt, cleanse our hearts and cement these two mighty divisions of the human family. (*Young India*, 30 December 1926)

(c)

If you hold dear the memory of Swami Shraddhanandji, you would help in purging the atmosphere of mutual hatred and calumny. You would help in boycotting papers which foment hatred and spread misrepresentation. I am sure that India would lose nothing if 90 per cent of the papers were to cease today...Now you will perhaps understand why I have called Abdul Rashid a brother and I repeat it. I do not even regard him as guilty of Swamiji's murder. Guilty indeed are all those who excited feelings of hatred against one another. For us Hindus the Gita enjoins on us the lesson of equi-mindedness; we are to cherish the same feelings towards a learned Brahman as towards a *chandala*, a dog, a cow or an elephant.

This is no occasion for mourning or tears, it is an occasion that should burn on

our hearts the lesson of bravery.. Let us not shed tears of sorrow but chasten our hearts and steel them with some of the fire and faith that were Shraddhanandji's. (Speech at Gauhati Congress, 1926)

V

THE NATIONAL WEEK

The 6th and the 13th of April are never-to-be-forgotten days in our national life. The 6th of April 1919 witnessed an unparallelled demonstration in which Hindus, Musalmans and others joined freely. It was too a day of freedom for the suppressed classes. That day laid the foundation for true Swadeshi. And it was the day when the whole country offered civil disobedience. The spirit of mass freedom and mass resistance was abroad.

The 13th of April witnessed the Jallianwala massacre in which Hindu, Musalman and Sikh blood mingled in one scarlet stream. A dung-heap was turned in a day into a place of political pilgrimage for all India. It will remain that till India lives...

The week is pre-eminently one of self-purification and self-introspection. It is my

G.L.4.

fixed conviction...that we shall not make this unhappy land happy except by purity of conduct which spelt otherwise means truth and non-violence. Such purity can come only by prayer and fasting. I therefore suggest to those who believe in prayer and fasting to devote the 6th and the 13th to that sacred purpose.

...We cannot proclaim...the unity of Hindus and non-Hindus....That question must therefore for the time being be left to work itself out.

GANDHIJI TRAINING CENTRE
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T. KALLUPATTI

Hindus have the impurity of untouchability to remove. They can fraternize with Harijans, set apart what they can spare for the relief of distress among them, and in a variety of ways make them feel that they are no longer the despised class among Hindus.

Hindu-Muslim unity, Khadi and removal of untouchability are to me the foundation for Swaraj. On that firm foundation it is possible to erect a structure nobler than which the world has not seen. Anything without that foundation will be like a building built on sand.

Khadi alone lends itself to mass demonstration and mass effort. It is the

platform on which all can work hand in hand. Sales can be organized. Voluntary spinning can be pushed. It is open to local workers to devise various ways of celebrating the national week. I can only think of things in which millions can take part and which can promote Swaraj. I can think of nothing else that satisfies all the conditions so well as the spinning wheel.

Oh that we can do one thing truly and well. . . The spinning wheel is the one thing in which men, women, boys and girls of all classes can work. It is the one thing that can establish a link between the rich and the poor, and it is the one thing that can bring a ray of sunshine into the dark and dilapidated cottages of the half-starved peasantry . . .

[This section is based on two articles by Gandhiji in *Young India* of March 18, 1926 and of April 2, 1925. *Ed.*]

VI

HOW WE CELEBRATED THE WEEK IN 1926

[Gandhiji left India in 1893 at the age of 23, and in the 46th year of his age he landed at Apollo Bandar in the second week of January, 1915. I had the good fortune to be one of those who were there to welcome him home and who ran after his car for some distance. I had the privilege of living in the Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab in the first year of its existence. Gandhiji had not yet discovered the spinning-wheel. We therefore did not spin, but toil we did. For instance I ground corn with Gandhiji on October 2, 1915 as the entry in my diary shows. We also fetched water from the well on the opposite side of the road along with Gandhiji. I was also in the Ashram at Sabarmati in 1926 and was a humble participant in the celebrations the description of which by Shri Mahadev Desai is summarized below. *Ed.*]

...Five groups decided in their respective quarters to work the spinning-wheel day and night from 4 a.m. on the 6th to 7 p.m. on the 13th, the rest working their own wheels and also working a loom day and night from the morning of the 6th to the evening of the 13th.

...The wheels and the loom worked away day and night, without for a moment going wrong or stopping, and without any one who attended to them at night ever falling ill. Especial enthusiasm was evoked on the day when a youngster of 16 one day worked at his wheel for 14 hours and registered his yarn score at the evening prayer. It was 4,444 rounds or 5,925 yards. That spurred others to emulate his exploit with the result that five more champions entered the lists, the most successful of them scoring as many as 9,119 rounds or over 12,160 yards of 17 counts, having been at his wheel for 22 hours and 30 minutes at a stretch, spinning at a sustained speed of 540 yards an hour.

But the pioneer was not to be baulked of the fruits of his first unique achievement. He did on the last day 7,000 rounds, thus topping the list in the whole week's individual outturn, his score being 17,244 rounds or 22,992 yards, i.e. nearly 3,000 yards per day.

...All the time that the boys did not spin they gave to cleaning, ginning, carding and slivering the cotton that they and their elders turned into yarn during the day....

The result of the last day's spurt [was as follows] :

	Total rounds	Average per head		Rounds
Men	44,493	840	Day's total	1,43,898
Women	27,488	887	Average per head	1,170
School Children	65,485	2339	[The same on ordinary days 271]	
Infants	6,432	585		

The result of the day and night working of one loom, 5 men and women sitting at it in turns, was as below :

Total hours of work	180
Total persons	40
Total outturn	190 yards of 21" width

...The oldest members of the Ashram, viz. Gandhiji and Kasturba scored a total of 3,829 and 4,226 rounds respectively, and the youngest — a grand-daughter of the oldest — scored 4,323 rounds.

VII

THE FEAR OF DEATH

[This is the editor's translation of a Gujarati article by Gandhiji which appeared in *Young India* of October 13, 1921]

I have been collecting descriptions of Swaraj. One of these would be: Swaraj is the abandonment of the fear of death. A nation which allows itself to be influenced by the fear of death cannot attain Swaraj, and cannot retain it if somehow attained.

English people carry their lives in their pockets. Arabs and Pathans consider death as nothing more than an ordinary ailment; they never weep when a relation dies. Boer women are perfectly innocent of this fear. In the Boer war thousands of young Boer women became widows, but they never cared. It did not matter in the least if the husband or the son was lost; it was enough and more than enough that the country's honour was safe. What booted the husband if the country was enslaved? It was infinitely better to bury a son's mortal remains and to cherish his immortal memory than to bring him up as a serf.

Thus did the Boer women steel their hearts and cheerfully give up their darlings to the angel of death.

The people I have mentioned kill and get killed. But what of those who do not kill but are only ready to die themselves? Such people become the objects of a world's adoration. They are the salt of the earth.

The English and the Germans fought one another; they killed and got killed. The result is that animosities have increased. There is no end of unrest and the present condition of Europe is pitiful. There is more of deceit, and each is anxious to circumvent the rest.

But the fearlessness which we are cultivating is of a nobler and purer order, and it is therefore that we hope to achieve a signal victory within a very short time.

When we attain Swaraj, many of us will have given up the fear of death; or else we shall not have attained Swaraj. Till now mostly young boys have died in the cause. Those who died in Aligadh were all below twenty-one. No one knew who they were. If Government resort to firing now, I am hoping that some men of the first rank will have the opportunity of offering up the supreme sacrifice.

Why should we be upset when children or young men or old men die? Not a moment passes when some one is not born or is not dead in this world. We should feel the stupidity of rejoicing in a birth and lamenting a death. Those who believe in the soul, — and what Hindu, Musalman, or Parsi is there who does not, — know that the soul never dies. The souls of the living as well as of the dead are all one. The eternal processes of creation and destruction are going on ceaselessly. There is nothing in it for which we might give ourselves up to joy or sorrow. Even if we extend the idea of relationship only to our countrymen and take all the births in the country as taking place in our own family, how many births shall we celebrate? If we weep for all the deaths in our country, the tears in our eyes would never dry. This train of thought should help us to get rid of all fear of death.

India, they say, is a nation of philosophers; and we have not been unwilling to appropriate the compliment. Still hardly any other nation becomes so helpless in the face of death as we do. And in India again, no other community betrays so much of this helplessness as the Hindus. A single

birth is enough for us to be beside ourselves with ludicrous joyfulness. A death makes us indulge in orgies of loud lamentation which condemn the neighbourhood to sleeplessness for the night. If we wish to attain Swaraj, and if having attained it, wish to make it something to be proud of, we must perfectly renounce this unseemly fright.

And what is imprisonment to the man who is fearless of death itself? If the reader will think it out a little, he will find that if Swaraj is delayed, it is delayed because we are not prepared calmly to meet death and inconveniences lesser than death.

As larger and larger numbers of innocent men come out to welcome death, their sacrifice will become the potent instrument for the salvation of all others; and there will be a minimum of suffering. Suffering cheerfully endured ceases to be suffering and is transmuted into ineffable joy. The man who flies from suffering is the victim of endless tribulation before it has come to him and is half dead when it does come. But one who is cheerfully ready for anything and everything that comes escapes all pain; his cheerfulness acts as an anaesthetic.

I have been led to write about this subject, because we have got to envisage even death if we will have Swaraj this very year. One who is previously prepared often escapes accidents ; and this may well be the case with us. It is my firm conviction that Swadeshi constitutes this preparation. When our Swadeshi is a success, neither this Government nor any one else will feel the necessity of putting us to any further test.

Still it is best not to neglect any contingency whatever. Possession of power makes men blind and deaf ; they cannot see things which are under their very nose, and cannot hear things which invade their ears. There is thus no knowing what this power-intoxicated Government may not do. So it seemed to me that patriotic men ought to be prepared for death, imprisonment and similar troubles.

The brave meet death with a smile on their lips but they are circumspect all the same. There is no room for foolhardiness in this non-violent war. We do not propose to go to jail or to die by an immoral act. We must mount the gallows while resisting the oppressive laws of this Government.

VIII

THE DRINK EVIL

(a)

The use of intoxicants like wine and the rest not only leads to mental and physical decay, but also deadens the moral instincts and destroys all power of self-control.

(b)

Drugs and drink are the two arms of the devil.

(c)

I hold drinking spirituous liquors in India to be more criminal than the petty thefts which I see starving men and women committing and for which they are prosecuted and punished. I do tolerate, very unwillingly it is true and helplessly because of want of full realization of the law of love, a moderate system of penal code. And so long as I do, I must advocate the summary punishment of those who manufacture the fiery liquid and those even who will persist in drinking it notwithstanding repeated warnings. I do not hesitate forcibly to prevent my children from rushing into fire

or deep waters. Rushing to red water is far more dangerous than rushing to raging furnace or flooded stream. The latter destroys only the body ; the former destroys both body and soul.

(d)

You will not be deceived by the specious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them. The State does not cater for the vices of its people. We do not regulate and license houses of ill-fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge in their propensity for thieving. I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both ?

(e)

In a climate like ours there is no need for drink whatsoever. Nothing but ruin stares a nation in the face that is a prey to the drink habit. . . .The great community to which Shri Krishna belonged was ruined by that habit. The monstrous evil was one of the contributing factors in the fall of Rome. If therefore you will live decently,

you will shun this evil whilst there is yet time.

(f)

There is no halfway house between drunkenness and prohibition. Well-to-do men may pretend to be moderate. But there is no such thing as moderation possible among labourers.

(g)

If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops,...and compel factory owners to produce humane conditions for their workers and open refreshment and recreation rooms where these workmen would get innocent drinks and equally innocent amusements.

IX

'I HAVE A HORROR OF SMOKING'

(a)

I have a horror of smoking as I have of wines. Smoking I consider to be a vice. It deadens one's conscience and is often worse than drink in that it acts imperceptibly. It is an expensive vice. It fouls the breath, discolours the teeth and sometimes even causes cancer. It is an unclean habit.

(b)

[I] have always regarded the habit of smoking as barbarous, dirty and harmful. ...I cannot bear to travel in a compartment full of people smoking. I become choked.

(c)

Cigarette smoking and coffee and tea drinking...are not necessities of life.... Some...take 10 cups of coffee a day. Is it necessary...for keeping them awake for the performance of their duties? If [that is so], let them not drink coffee or tea but go to sleep. We must not become slaves to these things....Cigars and cigarettes, whether foreign or indigenous, must be avoided. Cigarette smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have

a touch of opium about them....How can you foul your mouth by converting it into a chimney?...A drunkard in Tolstoy's story is hesitating to execute his design of murder so long as he has not smoked his cigar. But he puffs it and then gets up smiling and saying 'What a coward am I,' takes the dagger and does the deed. Tolstoy spoke from experience. He has written nothing without having had personal experience of it. And he is much more against [smoking] than against drink. But do not make the mistake that between drink and tobacco, drink is a lesser evil. No. If cigarettes is Beelzebub, then drink is Satan.

X

A PROGRAMME FOR PROHIBITION

(a)

India has the capacity and the opportunity to lead the world in the matter of prohibition. Can she forgo the revenue derived from this degrading traffic? She must if she is to live (*Harijan*, X-32. September 15, 1946, p. 313).

(b)

If the Governments, Central and Provincial, were true to the Congress requirements, there would be no spirituous liquors or intoxicating drugs such as opium, *ganja* and the like to be had... (*Delhi Diary*, November 7, 1947, p. 150).

(c)

The following steps will have to be taken simultaneously in order to make a success of the reform:

1. Passing of the requisite law;
2. Educating public opinion;
3. Opening at the same place as grog-shops refreshment rooms selling harmless drinks and providing innocent entertainment in the form of books, newspapers, games etc.;
4. The income from the sale of intoxicants should be spent on cultivating public opinion in favour of prohibition (*Harijan*, XI-34, September 21, 1947, p. 333).

XI

RACES, BETTING AND GAMBLING

(a)

I have often written about the evils of racing. But mine was then a voice in the wilderness. The alien rulers liked the vice and clothed it with some kind of virtue. Surely there is no reason for now clinging to the vice. Or shall we retain the vices of the rule, and will its virtues quit with it? (*Harijan*, XI-29, August 17, 1947, p. 284).

(b)

A correspondent...writes...that the two [racing and betting] go together...It is wholly unnecessary for the sake of the love of horseflesh to have horse races and all their attendant excitement. They pander to the vices of humanity and mean a waste of good cultivable soil and good money. Who has not witnessed, as I have, the ruin of fine men caused by the gamble on the race courses? It is time to leave alone the vices of the West and to strive to adopt the best that it has to give (*Harijan*, XI-51, January 18, 1948, p. 515).

(c)

[The national] governments can certainly by their own example rob the evil

of the stamp of fashion that the bureaucracy has set upon it even to the point of wasting public money on the luxury. The princes will copy the example of good manners that [these] governments may set (*Harijan*, X-9, April 7, 1946, p. 67).

(d)

All I can say is that if it is within the competence of a popular government to put an end to the evil, it should certainly do so (*Harijan*, X-28, August 18, 1946, p. 275).

(e)

In a way it [gambling] is worse than the plague or the quake, for it destroys the soul within. A person without the soul is a burden upon the earth.

XII

SPIRITUALISM

I never receive communications from the spirits of the dead. I have no evidence warranting a disbelief in the possibility of such communications. But I strongly disapprove of the practice of holding... such communications....The practice is harmful both to the medium and the spirits, assuming the possibility of such communications.

XIII

THE IDEAL LAWYER

The duty of a lawyer is always to place before the judges, and to help them to arrive at, the truth, never to prove the guilty as innocent.

XIV

ANIMAL SACRIFICES

It is defaming God to offer animal sacrifices in temples. What God wants, if He can be said to want anything, is the sacrifice made by a humble and contrite heart.

XV

VIVISECTION

My soul rebels against vivisection.... Why should I...have to practise cruelty on lower animals which I would never practise upon myself?

XVI

VEGETARIANISM

(a)

It is part of my religious conviction that man may not eat meat, eggs and the like.

(b)

A man eating meat...but living in fear of God is nearer his salvation than a man.....abstaining from meat.....but blaspheming God in every one of his acts.

XVII

MY MISSION

My mission is to convert every Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim, or any other, even Englishmen and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious. (*Economics of Khadi*, p. 587)

XVIII

NON-VIOLENCE AND KHADI

(a)

Khadi has been conceived as the foundation and the image of *ahimsa* [non-violence]. (*Economics of Khadi*, p. 535)

(b)

I identify Khadi with non-violence. Khadi is the chief village handicraft. Kill Khadi and you must kill the villages and with them non-violence. (*Ibid*, p. 593)

(c)

If pestilence, poverty and bloodshed are to be avoided, there is no remedy but Khadi and other village industries. (*Ibid*, p. 546)

(d)

For twenty years I have preached the cult of Khadi to my countrymen. I want to preach the same cult today when I am at death's door. (*Ibid*, p. 537)

[From speech at Haripura Congress Exhibition, February 16, 1938]

(e)

It involves the honour of Indian womanhood. Every one who has any connection with the mill industry knows that the women working in the mills are exposed to temptations and risks to which they ought not to be exposed. Many women for want of home employment accept road repair labour. And only those who know what this labour is understand the risks the women run. Give them the spinning-wheel, and no women need ever seek any other employment than sitting at the spinning-wheel. (*Ibid*, p. 17)

XIX

KHADI IN VARIOUS ASPECTS

(a)

[An appeal addressed to women]

There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. The fine fabric that we have imported from the West or the Far East has literally killed millions of our brothers and sisters, and delivered thousands of our sisters to a life of shame. True art must be evidence of happiness, contentment and purity of its authors. And if you will have

such art revived in our midst, the use of Khadi is obligatory on the best of you....

...It is imperative for every one of you to spin during your leisure hours. I have suggested to boys and men also that they should spin. But the main burden of spinning must as of old fall on your shoulders.... You must form spinning clubs, institute spinning competitions and flood the Indian market with handspun yarn....

...The economic and moral salvation of India thus rests mainly with you. (*Economics of Khadi*, pp. 41-42)

(b)

The revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and moral regeneration of India. (*Ibid*, p. 23)

(c)

I would make every...Indian learn spinning or weaving and make him or her do that work for a certain fixed portion of every day. I would start in the schools and colleges. (*Ibid*, p. 16)

(d)

Of all my outward activities I do believe that the spinning wheel is the most permanent and the most beneficial.... [It] will solve the problem of the economic distress in millions of India's homes, and it constitutes an effective insurance against famines....

The millions are living in enforced idleness for at least four months in the year. The restoration therefore of the spinning wheel solves the economic problem at a stroke....

I do say that to supply India with cloth manufactured either outside or inside through gigantic mills is an economic blunder of the first magnitude, just as it would be to supply cheap bread through huge bakeries established in the chief centres in India and to destroy the family stove. (*Ibid*, pp. 71-72)

(e)

I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.... Such Swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium. (*Ibid*, p. 4)

(f)

If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine, ... every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible. (*Ibid*, p. 8)

(g)

India is really a republican country, and it is because it is that it has survived every shock hitherto delivered. Princes and potentates have hardly touched the vast masses except for collecting revenue. . . .The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it they dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. (*Ibid*, p. 6)

(h)

I am confident of earning [the] blessings [of posterity] for suggesting a revival of the *charkha*. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love. (*Ibid*, p. 68)

(i)

If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be

today a land flowing with milk and honey. (*Ibid*, p. 7)

She can live for herself only if she produces. . .everything for her requirements within her own borders. (*Ibid*, p. 8)

(k)

I would. . .plead for a stiff protective duty upon foreign goods. (*Ibid*, p. 9)

(l)

God be thanked that the beautiful women of the Punjab have not yet lost the cunning of their fingers. It is to me a perfect delight to find them throwing balls of yarn into my lap. (*Ibid*, p. 14)

(m)

Without a cottage industry the Indian peasant is doomed. He cannot maintain himself from the produce of the land. He needs a supplementary industry. Spinning is the easiest, the cheapest and the best. (*Ibid*, p. 15)

(n)

Multiplication of mills. . .can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded. (*Ibid*, p. 16)

(o)

Swadeshi is our veritable *Kamadhenu* supplying all our wants and solving many of our difficult problems. (*Ibid*, p. 17)

(p)

In hand-spinning is hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine, and the cheapening of prices. In it is hidden the secret of Swaraj. The revival of hand-spinning is the least penance we must do for the sin of our forefathers in having succumbed to the satanic influences of the foreign manufacturer (*Ibid*, p. 28).

(q)

I claim for it [the spinning-wheel] the properties of a musical instrument, for whilst the hungry and naked woman will refuse to dance to the accompaniment of a piano, I have seen women beaming with joy to see the spinning-wheel work, for they know that they can through that rustic instrument both feed and clothe themselves (*Ibid*, p. 30).

(r)

India being a cotton-producing country, it must be considered a crime to import

a single yard of yarn from outside (*Ibid*, pp. 30-31).

(s)

The problem is that of. . .putting *charkhas* in every one of the six crore homes (*Ibid*, p. 33).

(t)

The *charkha* [is] the most efficient means of making education available to the seven and a half lakhs [hundred thousands] of villages in India. [Thus] the nation [will be] able to solve the problem of financing mass education without any extra taxation (*Ibid*, p. 35).

(u)

I see no art in weaving muslins that do not cover but only expose the body (*Ibid*, p. 36).

(v)

We shall then refine that imperialism into a commonwealth of nations which will combine. . . .for the purpose of giving their best to the world and of protecting, not by brute force but by self-suffering, the weaker nations or races of the earth. Non-co-operation aims at nothing less than this revolution in the thought world. Such a transformation can come only after the

complete success of the spinning-wheel. India can become fit for delivering such a message when she has become proof against temptation and therefore attacks from outside by becoming self-contained regarding her chief needs — food and clothing (*Ibid*, p. 37).

(w)

Agriculture and hand-spinning are the two lungs of the national body. They must be protected against consumption at any cost (*Ibid*, p. 39).

(x)

[The] destruction [of foreign cloth] was the most economical use you could have made of it, even as destruction of plague-infected articles is their most economical and best use (*Ibid*, p. 40).

(y)

Foreign cloth to India is like foreign matter to the body. The destruction of the former is as necessary for the health of India as of the latter for the health of the body (*Ibid*, p. 48).

(z)

Millions are too poor to buy enough Khadi to replace the discarded cloth.... Let them be satisfied with a mere loin-cloth.

......Let there be no prudery about dress. India has never insisted on full covering of the body for the males as a test of culture.

...In order...to set the example, I propose to discard...my *topi* and vest, and to content myself with only a loincloth and a *chaddar* whenever found necessary for the protection of the body (*Ibid*, p. 50, *Young India*, 29 September 1921).

XX

THE NATIONAL FLAG

If we wish to cultivate non-violent force as opposed to brute force, we should all ply the spinning-wheel and understand its implications. And then we shall be entitled to sing the song of our tricolour flag. Our present flag retains only the wheel as a symbol of the spinning-wheel. This wheel is supposed to signify peace, progress and so forth, and that is all to the good, but when the tricolour was first thought of, its meaning was that all the people of India would live in harmony with one another and acquire non-violent strength through the spinning-wheel.

If all men and women and children of age out of the forty crores of India plied the wheel, they would spin all the yarn required for weaving enough *khadi* for the use of the millions and save crores of rupees. But that was not of great consequence. The greatest thing he valued was the power generated by the co-operative effort of these forty crores of people. Was there any other occupation which could employ such numbers without exploiting any one ? The mills could never do that. They could employ only a few lakhs leaving under partial or full unemployment the millions. In the past they had plied the wheel, say for his sake, but without understanding its full import. That was why the wheel was largely discarded. He wanted them to take to it now with deliberation and understanding. It meant freedom from exploitation. If it meant non-violence, as it did, it also meant a moral life. If they did that they would never discard it again, they would have no communal or other quarrels and they would become the harbingers of peace for the whole world. (*Delhi Diary*, p. 252)

XXI

NON-VIOLENCE IN VARIOUS ASPECTS

(a)

...Truth...is to me synonymous with non-violence through which and which alone I can see and reach Truth.

(b)

Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence... But...non-violence is infinitely superior to violence.

(c)

Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.

(d)

In a family, when a father slaps his delinquent child the latter does not think of retaliating. He obeys his father not because of the deterrent effect of the slap but because of the offended love which he senses behind it. That...is an epitome of the way in which society should be governed.

(e)

My ethics not only permit me to claim but require me to own kinship with not merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion.

(f)

I do not want to live at the cost of the life even of a snake. I should let him bite me to death rather than kill him.... Snakes, tigers etc. are God's answer to the poisonous, wicked, evil thoughts we harbour.... If I want to rid the earth of venomous beasts and reptiles, I must rid myself of all venomous thoughts.

(g)

Himsa [violence] is an inherent necessity for life in the body. That is why a votary of *ahimsa* always prays for ultimate deliverance from the bondage of flesh.

(h)

I would not kill a human being for protecting a cow, as I will not kill a cow for saving a human life, be it ever so precious.

(i)

I cannot for a moment bear to see a dog . . . helplessly suffering the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated because in its case I am without a remedy. Should my child be attacked by rabies and there was no hopeful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life.

(k)

The principle of *ahimsa* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by one's holding on to what the world needs. (*From Yeravda Mandir*)

(l)

Without *ahimsa* it is not possible to seek and find truth. (*Ibid*)

(m)

Under this rule there is no room for organized assassinations, there is no room for murders even openly committed, and

there is no room for any violence even for the sake of your country and even for guarding the honour of precious ones that may be in your charge. After all that would be a poor defence of the honour. *Ahimsa* tells us that we may guard the honour of those who are in our charge by delivering ourselves into the hands of the man who would commit the sacrilege. And that requires far greater physical and mental courage than the delivering of blows. You may have some degree of physical power,—I do not say courage,—and you may use that power. But after that is expended, what happens? The other man is filled with wrath, and you have made him more angry by matching your violence against his; and when he has done you to death, the rest of his violence is delivered against your charge. But if you do not retaliate but stand your ground between your charge and the opponent simply receiving the blows without retaliating, what happens? I give you my promise that the whole of the violence will be expended on you and your charge will be left unscathed.

(n)

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for *rishis* [seers] and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute.

(o)

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.

(p)

Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realizing Him.

(q)

Anger is the enemy of *ahimsa* ; and pride is a monster that swallows it up.

(r)

Ahimsa is not mere non-killing. A person who remains smugly satisfied with the non-killing of noxious life but has no love in his heart for all that lives will be counted as least in the Kingdom of Heaven. True love is boundless like the ocean, and rising and swelling within one spreads itself out, and crossing all boundaries and frontiers envelops the whole world.

(s)

To me it is one of the most active forces in the world. It is like the sun that rises upon us unfailingly from day to day. [Indeed] it is infinitely greater than a million suns put together. It radiates life and light and peace and happiness.

(t)

The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat. Even so must the hardest heart melt before sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat.

(u)

Ahimsa must express itself through acts of selfless service of the masses. I cannot think of a better symbol of or medium for its expression than the spinning-wheel.

(v)

Himsa does not merely mean indulgence in physical violence; resort to trickery, falsehood, intrigue, chicanery and deceitfulness — in short, all unfair and foul means come under the category of *himsa*, and acceptance of *ahimsa* necessarily implies renunciation of all these things.

A votary of *ahimsa* has therefore to be incorruptible, fair and square in his dealings, truthful, straightforward and utterly selfless. He must have also true humility.

(w)

It is the law of love that rules mankind. Had violence, i.e. hate, ruled us, we should have become extinct long ago. And yet the tragedy of it is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence.

(x)

I have been practising with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed. Where it has seemed sometimes to have failed, I have ascribed it to my imperfections. I claim no perfection for myself, but I claim to be a passionate seeker after Truth which is but another name for God. In the course of that search the discovery of non-violence came to me. Its spread is my life-mission. I have no interest in living except for the prosecution of that mission.

(y)

We dare not exchange non-violence even for Swaraj [independence]. For Swaraj thus got will be no true Swaraj.

(z)

Ahimsa does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is *ahimsa.*

XXII

NON-VIOLENCE AGAIN

(a)

All have to destroy some life,

(a) for sustaining their own bodies,

(b) for protecting those under their care, or

(c) sometimes for the sake of those whose life is taken.

(a) and (b) mean *himsa* to a greater or less extent. (c) means no *himsa* and is therefore *ahimsa*. *Himsa* in (a) and (b) is unavoidable.

A progressive *ahimsa*-ist will therefore commit the *himsa* contained in (a) and (b) as little as possible, only when it is unavoidable, and after full and mature deliberation and having exhausted all remedies to avoid it.

Taking life may be a duty. We do destroy as much life as we think necessary for sustaining our body. Thus for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitoes and the like by the use of disinfectants and we do not think that we are guilty of irreligion in doing

so....For the benefit of the species we kill carnivorous beasts....Even manslaughter may be necessary in certain cases. Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about, sword in hand, and killing any one that comes in his way, and no one dares to capture him alive. Any one who despatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent man.

(b)

To say or write a distasteful word is surely not violent especially when the speaker or writer believes it to be true. The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word or act, i.e. an intention to do harm to the opponent so-called.

(c)

सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात्। न ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियम्।

[This] Sanskrit text in my opinion means that one should speak the truth in gentle language. One had better not speak it, if one cannot do so in a gentle way; meaning thereby that there is no truth in a man who cannot control his tongue.

(d)

The hardest heart [must soften] and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice.

(e)

Non-violence presupposes the ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance. But vengeance is any day superior to passive, effeminate and helpless submission. Forgiveness is higher still. Vengeance too is weakness. The desire for vengeance comes out of fear of harm, imaginary or real. A man who fears no one on earth would consider it troublesome even to summon up anger against one who is vainly trying to injure him.

(f)

Non-violence to be a potent force must begin with the mind. Non-violence of the mere body without the co-operation of the mind is non-violence of the weak or the cowardly and has therefore no potency. If we bear malice and hatred in our bosoms and pretend not to retaliate, it must recoil

upon us and lead to our destruction. For abstention from mere bodily violence not to be injurious, it is at least necessary not to entertain hatred if we cannot generate active love.

(g)

From violence done to the foreign ruler, violence to our own people whom we may consider to be obstructing the country's progress is an easy natural step.

(h)

The spiritual weapon of self-purification, intangible as it seems, is the most potent means of revolutionizing one's environment and loosening external shackles. It is the straightest way to liberation, the surest and quickest.

(i)

Suffering injury in one's own person is on the contrary of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for

Satyagraha but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and what is more, it ennobles those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice.

(k)

The main thing....is for women to know how to be fearless. It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured. However beastly the man, he will bow in shame before the flame of her dazzling purity....It (the art of becoming fearless) can best be learnt from a living faith in God. Though He is invisible, He is our unfailing protector. He who has this faith is the most fearless of all.

But such faith or courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meanwhile we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted, she may not stop to think in terms of *himsa* or *ahimsa*. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that comes to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and if need be,

die in the effort.... Whether a man crawls on his belly or whether a woman yields to the lust of man, it is symbolic of that same love of life which makes us stoop to anything. Therefore only he who loses his life shall save it; तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः।.... To enjoy life one should give up the lure of life. That should be part of our nature.

(1)

If I had been a citizen of Switzerland.... what I would have done would be to refuse passage to the invading army by refusing all supplies. Secondly by re-enacting a Thermopylae in Switzerland, [I] would have presented a living wall of men and women and children, and invited the invaders to walk over our corpses.... The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say you will still have done your duty by allowing yourself to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women would not be able to repeat that experiment.

BY M. K. GANDHI

Autobiography	7	0	0
Satyagraha in South Africa	4	8	0
Hind Swaraj	0	8	0
Non-violence in Peace & War Vol. I	7	0	0
Non-violence in Peace & War Vol. II	5	0	0
Self-restraint *v.* Self-indulgence	2	0	0
Constructive Programme — Its Meaning and Place	0	6	0
Cent Percent Swadeshi	2	0	0
Women and Social Injustice	3	0	0
To the Students	3	8	0
Communal Unity	9	0	0
Hindu Dharma	4	0	0
Satyagraha	5	8	0
Towards Non-violent Socialism	2	0	0
Gandhiji's Correspondence with Govt. (1942-44)	2	8	0
From Yeravda Mandir	0	8	0
Bapu's Letters to Mira	4	0	0
Basic Education	1	8	0
Delhi Diary	3	0	0
Diet and Diet Reform	2	0	0
Food Shortage and Agriculture	2	8	0
For Pacifists	1	4	0
Unto This Last	0	6	0

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